



Dance

Melissa Paul

The College of Fine and Applied Arts, through its Department of Speech and Theatre Arts, initiated a ballet division in the fall of 1970. The ballet faculty included Director Heinz Poll, Miss Valerie Grieg, and Mrs. Juli Nunlist. Originally, Dance Institute began as a “weekend school.” Gena would pick up Heinz Poll at Akron Canton Airport every other Friday for his weekend of training young Ohio dancers.

Full days of technique classes would be held at Memorial Hall, and by October 1968, the Dance Institute presented its first public performance of the Chamber Ballet at Kolbe Hall with Artistic Director Heinz Poll, Associate

Directors Gena Carroll and Thomas Skelton, and local dance studio directors rotating as faculty. Eventually, The University of Akron gave the Dance Institute and Chamber Ballet (Ohio Ballet) its own small two-studio building on James Street.

By fall 1970, under President Norman Auburn, the Ballet Division offered professional dance training within a full four-year academic degree-granting program. Chamber Ballet dancers received full scholarships for their pursuit of dance. The Dance Institute became a full-time, pre-professional, K-12, after-school dance program on the campus.

In 1976, the Dance programs moved to the old St. Paul's when the School of Music moved to newly completed Guzzetta Hall. In 2006, the School of Dance and Dance Institute moved to a new addition at Guzzetta Hall, leaving the historic building with its distinctive Akron plan design empty.

Lana Carroll Heylock became head of the Dance Institute in 1994 and premiering its first full-length story ballet, *The Snow Maiden*, which was conceived and produced by her brother and principal dancer, Andrew, and herself with choreography by six Dance Institute faculty members. To this date, every other year *The Snow Maiden* continues to engage nearly one hundred Dance Institute students to tell the heartwarming winter story to audiences at E. J. Thomas Hall. Lana spearheaded the Gena Carroll Scholarship Fund, and with community, family, and friend support, the Carroll Family Studio was named at the Guzzetta Hall Center for Dance and Theatre.